

Facility Maintenance

What is the Hazard or Problem:

As America's school buildings age, we face the growing challenge of maintaining the nation's schools facilities at level that enables our teachers to meet the needs of the 21st Century learners. Because facilities maintenance planning is constrained by real work budgets, planners must often think in terms of tradeoffs.

The Solution:

This Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities encourages information-based decision-making in this crucial aspect of educational services provided by schools. Because no two organizations face the same challenges, this guide focuses not on a single template for a Facilities Maintenance Plan, but rather on best practice processes that can be undertaken to construct a sound facilities plan to meet the unique needs of a school district.

Applicable Regulations/Consensus Standards:

Many are identified in the guide.

Who in your Town or School Can Help:

School business official, superintendent of schools, facilities director

Who to contact for free Government or Other Assistance with the Problem:

The guide will be available free of charge through the U.S. Government Printing Office

Further Reading (include Electronic Resources if Applicable):

Electronic resources are identified throughout the document

Draft of manual available at <http://nces.ed.gov/forum/maintenance.asp>

Executive Summary

As America's school buildings age, we face the growing challenge of maintaining the nation's education facilities at a level that enables our teachers to meet the needs of 21st Century learners. Facilities issues arise at all educational levels, from pre-kindergarten through postsecondary, and all sites, including both classrooms and administrative offices. Challenges arise in new and old facilities alike, although the types of concerns might be different.

Because we know that routine and unexpected maintenance demands are bound to arise, it is of paramount importance that every education organization proactively develop and implement a plan for dealing with these inevitabilities. A sound Facilities Maintenance Plan serves as evidence that school facilities are, and will be, cared for appropriately. Negligent facilities maintenance planning can cause real problems. Large capital investments can be squandered when buildings and equipment deteriorate or warranties become invalidated. Failing to maintain school facilities adequately also discourages future public investment in the education system.

However, school facilities maintenance is concerned about more than just resource management. It is about providing clean and safe environments for children. It is also about creating a physical setting that is appropriate and adequate for learning. A classroom with broken windows and cold drafts doesn't foster effective student learning. But neither does an apparently state-of-the-art school that is plagued with uncontrollable swings in indoor temperature.

To some people's surprise, facilities problems are less likely a function of geography or socioeconomics and more directly related to staff levels, training, and practices—all of which can be controlled by the organization. Thus, every education agency must plan to meet the challenges of effective facilities maintenance. It is simply too big a job to be addressed in a haphazard fashion. The consequences affect teaching and learning, student and staff health, day-to-day building operations, and the long-range fiscal outlook of the entire organization.

Experience at the local, state, and national levels suggests that effective school facility maintenance planning can:

- contribute to an organization's instructional effectiveness and financial well-being;
- improve the cleanliness, orderliness, and safety of an organization's facilities;
- reduce the operational costs and life cycle cost of a building;
- help staff identify facilities priorities proactively rather than reactively;
- extend the useful life of buildings; and
- increase energy efficiency and help the environment.

This *Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities* is designed for staff at the local school district level, where most facility maintenance is planned,

managed, and carried out. This audience includes school business officials, school board members, superintendents, principals, facilities maintenance planners, maintenance staff, and custodial staff. The *Guide* is also relevant to the school facilities interests of state education agency staff, community groups, vendors, and regulatory agencies.

Because no two organizations face precisely the same challenges, the *Guide* does not focus on a single template for a facilities maintenance plan, but rather on “best practice” processes an education organization can undertake to construct a sound facility maintenance plan that meets its unique needs and circumstances. The document offers recommendations on issues of vital importance such as:

- Why Does Facilities Maintenance Matter?
- Planning for School Facilities Maintenance
- Facilities Audits (Where to Begin)
- Providing a Safe Environment for Learning
- Maintaining School Facilities and Grounds
- Effectively Managing Staff and Contractors
- Evaluating Facilities Maintenance Practices

A primary focus of the *Guide* is the user-friendly presentation of the recommendations. Thus, the document includes checklists and sample materials from facility maintenance professionals throughout the country, as well as links to additional resources that support school facility maintenance initiatives. It also relies upon vignettes and case studies to help ensure that connections between “best practice” and the real world are evident.

In a nutshell, the *Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities* focuses on:

- ✓ school facility maintenance as a vital task in the responsible management of an education organization
- ✓ the needs of an education audience
- ✓ strategies and procedures for planning, implementing, and evaluating effective maintenance programs
- ✓ a process to be followed, rather than a canned set of ‘one size fits all’ solutions
- ✓ ‘best practice’ recommendations, rather than mandates

This *Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities* is the product of a cooperative endeavor between the National Forum on Education Statistics (<http://nces.ed.gov/forum>) and the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO®) International (<http://www.asbointl.org>). The project was sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov>), U.S. Department of Education. Roger Young (ryoung@haverhill-ma.com), Haverhill

(MA) Public Schools, chaired the Forum's School Facility Maintenance Task Force, which was charged with developing the document. Lee Hoffman managed the project for the National Center for Education Statistics. The *Guide* is available at no cost via the World Wide Web at <http://nces.ed.gov/forum/publications.asp>. One free copy of the paper document can be ordered at the U.S. Department of Education's ED PUBS Online Ordering System at <http://www.ed.gov/about/ordering.jsp> or 877-4-ED-PUBS. Multiple copies can be ordered for a fee at the U.S. Government Online Bookstore at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov/index.html> or 888-293-6498. For more information about this document or other free resource from the National Forum on Education Statistics and the National Center for Education Statistics, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/>.